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UNCLAS VATICAN 003634

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT. EUR FOR A/S JONES, EUR/WE (MENNUTI)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: POPE CONDEMNS DESECRATION OF JEWISH CEMETARY AND
ANTI-SEMITISM

1. (U) POPE JOHN PAUL II CONDEMNED GROWING ANTI-SEMITISM IN
EUROPE AFTER THIRTY-FIVE JEWISH GRAVES IN A ROME CEMETERY
WERE DESECRATED JULY 18. IN A TELEGRAM TO ROME'S CHIEF
RABBI JULY 19 PUBLISHED ON THE VATICAN'S WEBSITE, THE POPE
DESCRIBED THE DESECRATION AS A "DETESTABLE ACT THAT FOLLOWS
OTHER SIMILAR EVENTS OF A SERIOUS NATURE THAT HAVE TAKEN
PLACE WITH ALARMING FREQUENCY IN EUROPE AND ON OTHER
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CONTINENTS." THE POPE "STRONGLY CONDEMNED SIMILAR IGNOBLE
ACTS AND ANTI-SEMITIC SENTIMENTS THAT INSPIRE SUCH ACTS, AND
OFFERED HIS SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THE ACTS.

2. (SBU) COMMENT: THE POPE REGULARLY SENDS MESSAGES TO
COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEADERS IN RESPONSE TO MAJOR
CALAMITIES. HIS TELEGRAM TO ROME'S JEWISH COMMUNITY IS THE
ONLY ONE IN RECENT MEMORY TO CONDEMN ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS,
AND SUGGESTS A GROWING CONCERN ON THE PART OF THE VATICAN
FOR THE RISE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE. A JOURNALIST
CONTACT TOLD US THAT OVER DINNER THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, THE
ISRAELI DCM HAD MENTIONED HE WAS NOT EXPECTING VATICAN
COMMENTARY ON THE DESECRATION. EMBASSY HAS RECENTLY
ENCOURAGED CURIA OFFICIALS TO USE THE HOLY SEE'S MORAL VOICE
TO COUNTER RESURGENT ANTI-SEMITISM AND OTHER FORMS OF RACISM
AND XENOPHOBIA IN EUROPE. END COMMENT.

NICHOLSON

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